

How My Community College Has Changed My Life

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I have made many regrettable choices in life. Some were due to undiagnosed mental illness, some due to naiveté, and some due to good old fashioned lack of common sense. Until very recently I lived with the results of those poor choices; it felt like penance to do so. Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence had convinced me that I was unintelligent and deserved very little, so every day I slaved away at a dead end job to support my family, sinking deeper into the depths of depression and hopelessness.

It was not until I received a diagnosis for my mental illness and began a journey toward healing that the dark clouds lifted. Therapy, medication, hard work, and introspection allowed me to see clearly for the first time ever. Clarity allowed me to chart a new course for myself. This new course included academics, but those years of regrettable choices soon reared their ugly heads. The hard realization was that I am a single parent to three. I worked two jobs to make ends meet. I could not afford an education and had no time for classes.

The old me would have immediately folded and given up. The new me refused to fail. I began to research ways to achieve my goal. I settled on Kishwaukee College.

Here was my path through the forest. A low cost, quality education was available to me. All of my prerequisite classes could be taken at a fraction of the price of a university education. The availability of classes at times convenient to a working mom sealed the deal. I registered immediately. Leading up to the first day of class the old doubts crowded my mind. I resolved to not listen to the darkness and have faith in myself and my abilities. For the first time in my life I trusted myself.

On the first day of my new life I walked into class with my son's hand me down back pack. I sat at the front of the class. When my professors began lecturing about topics I didn't understand or speaking in a language unintelligible to me, instead of folding in upon myself and feeling unworthy and stupid, I felt myself smiling. I was here to learn and learn I would. When I received my first essay back with a grade of B instead of the A I expected, I smiled. Challenge accepted. My next essay WILL be an A.

I am incredibly grateful for so much. I am fulfilling a goal I set for myself because of the availability of community college. The accessibility of Kishwaukee College and the friendliness and helpfulness of the advisory staff really smoothed the way for me. I intend to complete an associate degree here and move on to a university to study neuroscience. I want to give back, especially in the area of mental health, and community college had made it possible.